Hypertext/Hypermedia for Organizational Memory Systems

Guy Boy
European Institute of Cognitive Sciences and Engineering (EURISCO)
4 avenue Edouard Belin, 31400 Toulouse, France
Tel: +33-5 62 17 38 38
E-mail: boy@onecet.fr

Norbert Streitz
German National Research Center for Information Technology (GMD) Integrated Publication and Information Systems Institute (IPSI) Dolivostr. 15, D-64293 Darmstadt, Germany
Tel: +49-6151-869-919
E-mail: streitz@darmstadt.gmd.de

Panelists
Guy Boy, EURISCO, France
Norbert Streitz, GMD-IPSI, Germany
Jeffrey Conklin, Group Decision Support Systems, Inc.
Brigitte Daniel, Aerospatiale, France
Martin Hollender, ABB Corporate Research, Germany
Yannick Maignien, Bibliothèque Nationale de France

Abstract
Increasingly, organizations have to rely on a common knowledge base which embodies all the information that is relevant for operating an organization. Radical changes in the workplace and the rise of new organizational forms, together with the availability of powerful new infrastructural technology (e.g., Internet, Intranet) require a new approach to the design and use of information systems in organizations. What kind of hypertext/media technology available and necessary should support organizational memory systems? Panelists will examine the extent to which hypertext/media are appropriate for this task. Targets for organizational memories are, for example, strategic planning, project proposals and management, patents, product design cycle documentation, marketing strategies and in each case the underlying design decision rationales. Although large quantities of information exist in corporate databases, they are not readily accessible, not in an adequate format, often not up-to-date, not well organized for reuse, and not well integrated in the overall work process. This becomes even more of a problem when individuals and teams of an organization are distributed in different locations, work in different time zones, and are often (re)assigned to different tasks in new projects.

Several issues are important, such as capturing, representing, documenting, tracing, and updating corporate information focusing on design decisions and requirements; support for creating and maintaining corporate memories in a cooperative and coordinated fashion in small groups and large organizations, annotation and versioning management, accessing and using corporate memories via support from advanced information retrieval, full text search, case-based reasoning in documentation management. And, last but not least, the psychological and social aspects/implications of organizational memory systems.

Multidisciplinary aspects of organizational memory systems are crucial, where various disciplines have to contribute and merge their results, in order to study the evolution and emergence of such systems both in industry and governmental organizations. It becomes essential to gather competencies in hypertext/media, computer-supported cooperative work, artificial intelligence, engineering, documentation, psychology and anthropology. Panelists will provide their viewpoints using their own area of expertise. The goal is to discuss salient problems strongly perceived by the participants.

A major claim to be tested is that hypermedia-supported organizational memory systems should be investigated using a situated bottom-up approach. Panelists will comment on some of the following issues, such as the difficult problem of defining interaction protocols, the usability of organizational memory systems, useful artifacts that emerge from integrating organizational memory systems, job evolution, and so on. They will talk about conceptual tools that are necessary to handle semantics, to create, to browse and to maintain large distributed hypermedia systems. Such tools should enable us to describe and formalize the evolution of preexisting structures from interaction between the actors, individuals or groups, and knowledge repositories. Cultural aspects of organizational memory systems will also be raised.

The panel mixes people from industry and academia who can be expected to provide controversial arguments and different viewpoints on the topic. The moderator will trigger significant questions that the panelists will discuss; they will provide insiders views of the complex issues that professionals face when dealing with organizational memory systems. Audience participation will be welcome.